

Message Text

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44

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-12 TRSE-00 SIL-01 LAB-06 AID-20 RSR-01 /108 W
----- 075255

R 301000 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7130
INFO AMCONSUL MEDAN
AMCONSUL SURABAYA

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINT, ID

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF FINANCE SAYS NEW CUSTOMS DIRECTOR WILL
CONTINUE CLEANUP DRIVE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL PLEDGES
REFORM

SUMMARY: MINISTER OF FINANCE HAS PLEDGED THAT NEW CUSTOMS DIRECTOR
(BRIG GEN TAHIR) WILL CONTINUE CLEANUP DRIVE LAUNCHED BY HIS
PREDECESSOR SLAMET DANUSUDIRDJO. MEANWHILE, ATTORNEY GENERAL ALI
SAID HAS PROMISED REFORMS IN PUBLIC PROSECUTION SYSTEM. FOLLOWING
BASED ON PRESS ACCOUNTS. END SUMMARY.

1. SPEAKING AT MAY 28 INAUGURATION OF OFFICIALS INCLUDING NEW
DIRECTOR

GENERAL FOR CUSTOMS, BRIG GEN TAHIR, MINISTER OF FINANCE ALI WARDHANA
SAID THAT " INVISIBLE COSTS" (I. E., ILLEGAL FEES) WHICH PLAGUE
INDONESIAN PORT OPERATIONS MUST BE STAMPED OUT. REFERRING TO PUBLIC
" MISUNDERSTANDING" ABOUT REPLACEMENT OF OUTGOING CUSTOMS DIRECTOR
BRIG GEN SLAMET DANUSUDIRDJO, WARDHANA SAID IT WAS IN NO WAY DUE TO
HIS VIGOROUS MEASURES. ACCORDING TO WARDHANA, TAHIR' S ACTIONS MIGHT
BE EVEN HARSHER. RATHER, SLAMET' S TALENTS WERE BADLY NEEDED ELSEWHERE
(HE HAS JUST BEEN NAMED SECRETARY GENERAL IN EMIL SALIM' S DEPARTMENT
OF COMMUNICATIONS.) WARDHANA AGAIN APPEALED TO PUBLIC (I. E.,
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IMPORTERS) TO COOPERATE IN DRIVE AGAINST " INVISIBLE COSTS".

2. COMMENT: INFORMED INDONESIANS (AND FOREIGNERS) ARE DEEPLY CYNICAL ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR REAL CUSTOMS CLEANUP, AS REFLECTED IN RECENT PRESS COMMENTARY. IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO PERSUADE MANY THAT SLAMET (WHO HELD THE TOP CUSTOMS JOB FOR ONLY ONE YEAR) HAS NOT BEEN SHIFTED BECAUSE HE WAS BEGINNING TO MAKE PROGRESS. HIS REPLACEMENT TAHIR, A CAREER MILITARY POLICE OFFICER, HAS MOST RECENTLY BEEN AN INVESTIGATOR FOR KOPKAMTIB (DEFENSE SECURITY AUTHORITY), AND ACCORDING PRESS HAS A GOOD REPUTATION FOR HONESTY, OPENNESS AND SIMPLE LIVING.

3. ON SAME DAY AS WARDHANA'S PRONOUNCEMENT, NEW ATTORNEY GENERAL (MAJOR GENERAL ALI SAID PLEDGED " RESTRUCTURING" AND CONTINUING CLEANUP DRIVE IN HIS DEPARTMENT. ALI TOLD PRESS CONFERENCE THAT 341 OF HIS EMPLOYEES HAD BEEN REPLACED SINCE 1966, 29 OF THEM DURING THE LAST WEEK. (OF THESE 273 WERE FIRED FOR INVOLVEMENT IN COUP, AND OTHERS FOR ABUSE OF AUTHORITY.) ALI SAID NOTED THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO EXPECT IDEAL PERFORMANCE FROM EMPLOYEES AS LONG AS PAY AND WORKING CONDITIONS WERE ANYTHING BUT IDEAL. HE ALSO PLEDGED AN EDN TO WIDESPREAD USE OF PAID INFORMERS BY PUBLIC PROSECUTORS.

4. COMMENT: JUDGING FROM THIS AND OTHER PUBLIC STATEMENTS, THE NEW ATTORNEY GENERAL (WHOSE PREDECESSOR SUGIH ARTO IS BEING NAMED AMBASSADOR TO LONDON) MAY BLOW A LITTLE FRESH AIR INTO THE STATE PROSECUTION APPARATUS. (HE HAS NOT YET SAID MUCH ABOUT THE SENSITIVE QUESTION OF POLITICAL DETAINEES.) BOTH HIS AND ALI WARDHANA'S STATEMENTS ARE TYPICAL OF THE INCREASED STRESS (IN OFFICIAL PRONOUNCEMENTS) ON CORRECTION OF BUREAUCRATIC WEAKNESSES, INCLUDING CORRUPTION, WHICH HAS BEEN NOTICEABLE HERE SINCE THE NEW CABINET WAS ANNOUNCED TWO MONTHS AGO.
GALBRAITH

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 MAY 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973JAKART06422
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: JAKARTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730555/aaaajvxv.tel
Line Count: 97
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 NOV 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21-Nov-2001 by martinml>; APPROVED <17-Dec-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> wfs 980306
Subject: MINISTER OF FINANCE SAYS NEW CUSTOMS DIRECTOR WILL CONTINUE CLEANUP DRIVE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL PLEDGES REFORM
TAGS: PINT, ID
To: EA
MEDAN
SECSTATE WASHDC
SURABAYA
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

